



**SOUTHERN AFRICAN SOCIETY OF PENTECOSTAL STUDIES A CALL
FOR CONFERENCE ABSTRACTS (2026)**

Theme: Democratisation, Prophecy and Politics in Pentecostalism

The early years of Pentecostalism were marked by passiveness towards socio-political issues. Fervent eschatological hope of the imminent return of Christ and the expected new order were the main reasons for this passiveness. Cosmic realities in the social landscape were deemed as evil forces fighting against the establishment of Christ's kingdom on earth. The notion was strong that 'Politicians rule the day, and politics is rotten' (Bartleman in Pipkin & Beaman 2016:54). Engagement and involvement were interpreted as friendship with the world. The separation between the believer and the world system was non-negotiable. One earlier Pentecostal preacher, Stanley Frodsham opined that 'The Cross of Jesus Christ is the place where the saint and the world separate forever' (In Pipkin & Beaman 2016:57). On the South African turf, one observes the famous Pentecostal pioneer, Nicholas Bhengu, who according to Watt (1992:178), did not often include political themes in his preaching. Bhengu perceived political themes as being motivated by hatred and allowed his attitude to be shaped by love. He believed that spiritual salvation provided the moral fibre required for people to emerge from their social and economic degradation. John Bond (2000:99) also stresses that Bhengu 'always avoided political involvement. He warned his people to steer clear of it, though his teaching and preaching had a great impact on the social and political psyche of the people of the sub-continent (Lephoko 2018:1). His emphasis revolved around grounding African identity in the Christ of God' (Mochechane n.d:230). 'Even where politics were disrespectful of human rights and dignity, such as apartheid South Africa, some Pentecostals were in positions of power' (Resane 2018:4). From the AFM in South Africa, one can trace this historical involvement. For instance, as Anderson (2005:8) alludes:

A vice-president of the church until 1969, Gerrie Wessels, became a National Party senator in 1955, and the wife of a government minister and later State President, Jim Fouché, was a member of the church.



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Early Pentecostals believed that issues such as voting, family planning, abortion, military conscription, cinema, sports, etc., were evil systems possessing high potency in allaying the joy of the Holy Spirit.

This negative perception towards politics has taken a new turn in the last six decades. Pentecostals are now immersed in politics for various reasons. Consider the current President of Ghana, John Dramani Mahama, who is a member of the Assemblies of God; the current President of Malawi, Lazarus Chakwera, is also a national leader of the Assemblies of God. The charismatic late President of Zambia, Frederick Chiluba, whose legacy is entrenched and conscientised by declaring Zambia a Christian state. These developments lead to the conclusion that Pentecostalism is not only about the Spirit and speaking in tongues, but also ignores the political context. Pentecostal theological approach cannot be divorced from the political developments of the country (Kgatlé 2024:122).

In the South African context, after 1994, many prominent Pentecostals entered the corridors of politics in all tiers of the government, proof that the wheel has turned around, that Pentecostals are now becoming politically conscious. They engage with their communities both spiritually and politically. They started to be aware that active socio-political involvement can effectuate godly change in society. The main areas of their focus continue to be advocacy and political candidacy. They engage actively in promoting religious freedom, justice, and moral codes. They vote for the candidates believed to be promoting godliness and righteousness.

2026 is the year of the Local Government elections in South Africa. It can be expected, as always, that prayer and prophecy will be at the center of pre-election deliberations. Prayers and prophecies are Pentecostal considerations since the Pentecostal Movement is historically a movement of conscientisation (Johns in Thomas, Moore & Land 2010). Since the world of politics is complex, Pentecostals are called upon to embark on spiritual disciplines such as prayer in order to make God-honouring political decisions when approaching the ballot boxes.



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Prophecy, understood as receiving and sharing inspired messages from the Holy Spirit, serves as a tool for divine guidance, offering insights into God's desire for justice, peace, and righteousness in the political sphere. This makes the intersections of prophecy and politics pivotal in the context of Pentecostals' engagement with the local political contexts (Kgatlé 2023). In reaction, there will soon be an emergence of prophecies concerning political candidacies and the post-election expectations. Although discernment plays a crucial role in weighing these prophecies, Paul's exhortation remains firm to *Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy*" (1 Corinthians 14:1, NKJV), highlighting the importance of prophecy in edifying the church and, by extension, society.

It is against this background that a call is made for the ***Southern African Society for Pentecostal Studies annual conference*** to be held at the University of Venda on 25-27 February 2026. Papers should concentrate on, though not limited to, addressing the theme of **Democratisation, Prophecy and Politics in Pentecostalism**

- The History of Politics in Pentecostalism
- Contact Without Contamination: Pentecostal Address to this Notion
- Pentecostal Practices in the Current Democratic South Africa
- Kingdom of Christ and Worldly Kingdom: Any synergy or symbiosis?
- Pentecostals and Freedom Charter After Seven Decades
- National Development Plan: Where and How Pentecostal Fit?
- Pentecostals and Kairos Reflections Forty Years Later
- Pentecostal Church Politics versus State Politics
- Pentecostals and Political Theology
- Interpreting Election Manifestos in the Light of Pentecostal Options of the Holy Spirit.
- Pentecostal theology of unity and the Government of National Unity
- Evangelicals and the Evangelical Witness of South Africa, forty years after.



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ABSTRACTS:

Abstracts should be between 250 and 500 words and should be emailed to ResaneKT@ufs.ac.za and kgatls@unisa.ac.za

Font 12pt, Times New Roman, 1.5 Line Spacing, Justified Paragraphs

CONFERENCE DETAILS:

Abstracts are due on 1 December 2025

Authors will be informed if their abstract was accepted or not on 15 December 2025

Full Conference papers are due on 16 February 2026

Conference Date: 25-27 February 2026

Conference Venue: University of Venda (Thohoyandou, Limpopo)

Conference Registration Fee: R600

Conference proceedings will be published in the *African Journal for Pentecostal Studies (AJOPS)*

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